

NEWS RELEASE

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a division of the
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

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Number of Pages: 2

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jefferson City, Missouri

Fall Hunters, Fishermen & Boating Safety.

It's that time of year when hunters take predawn pilgrimages to their hidden duck blinds and deer stands across the cold, dark waters of Autumn. Duck season and archery season for deer and turkey are open and firearms deer season opens in the middle of November. Hunters of all ages have already hit the water with their boats, dogs, guns, decoys, gear and enthusiastic attitudes. Colonel Jerry Adams, Commissioner of the Missouri State Water Patrol, encourages all boaters who will be using the waterways this Fall/Winter & Spring to take heed to the following suggestions.

- 1. Plan Your Trip** - Include in your planning not only the common sense things, like when you plan to leave and return home, but also those items necessary in case of emergency and what your actions will be. A radio/cell phone, dry clothes and matches in a water-proof bag, food and fresh water, flashlight/batteries, flares or signal kit are just a few items that would prove very beneficial in case of emergency.
- 2. File A Float Plan** - Leave a description of your boat, the number of persons on board, the area that you will be hunting/boating in and the time you expect to return with a friend or family member. If your boat capsizes and you are overdue in getting back, it is very important that the Water Patrol has a specific area to search. Time is of the essence in cold-water exposure and your time is limited.
- 3. Safety First** - Many hunters utilize Jon boats as their mode of transportation to and from their blinds/stands. It is very easy to overload a small Jon boat with decoys, equipment, dogs, hunters, guns and game. As the operator of the boat, it is your responsibility to ensure that you don't overload the boat. Small Jon boats (14'-16') are easily overloaded and are not safe in rough water conditions.
- 4. Weather Conditions** - The weather in the Fall changes with little to no warning. Always check the local forecast prior to going out on the water and **NEVER** rely on a small overloaded boat to get you safely across any body of water, especially one which is rough due to wind.

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5. **Equipment** - There is no piece of equipment on any boat that is more important than your **Personal Flotation Device** (PFD). The importance of wearing your PFD, especially during this time of the year, is very much understated. If you are a victim of a capsizing or falling overboard in the cold water months and you are not wearing your PFD, your chances of survival have just been decreased dramatically.

6. **Emergency Actions** - The victim of a cold-water emersion should focus all of his efforts toward getting out of the water. Water conducts the heat out of the body 25 times faster than the air and your time is limited to minutes if you remain in the water. Hypothermia means losing heat faster than one's body can produce it, causing a drop in (inner) body temperature. Cold water-immersion hypothermia happens quickly. Each time the head is immersed under cold water, heat escapes from the body speeding up hypothermia. If the water is cold enough, the person will eventually die of cardiac arrest if not rescued and re-warmed. **DON'T** remove heavy clothes in the water; they trap air and help keep you afloat in addition to trapping body heat. Keep your head above water; the majority of heat loss comes from the head. Don't panic; draw your knees to your chest and your arms to your sides in the Heat Escape Lessening Posture (H.E.L.P.) position, protecting the major areas of heat loss. If there are other people in the water with you, huddle together with your arms around their shoulders. These huddles are good for the morale of those in the water. Also, rescuers can spot them easier than individuals. A number of factors influencing a person's cooling rate and survival time in cold water (less than 70 degrees) include:

- Age, body size, physical condition and reaction
- Activity - trying to swim, floating, thrashing about
- Water temperature
- Amount of clothing being worn
- Alcohol consumption.

7. **Alcohol Effects** - Alcohol and cold weather, particularly cold water, can be fatal. Common sense and responsibility are the keys to avoiding possible injury or death. Alcohol consumption, unfortunately, accounts for many of these tragedies. Drinking clouds common sense, which in turn creates a false sense of security. Since alcohol lowers the body's resistance to cold water, it greatly increases the effect of torso reflex (the unexpected blast of cold water causing an automatic gasp for air) by increasing the metabolic rate and demand for oxygen in frigid water. As the alcohol level in a person's body increases, coordination abilities decrease.

Traditionally people only view the boating season to run from Memorial Day to Labor Day and recognize boating dangers during that time frame. The Missouri State Water Patrol, along with the local media, hopes to make this Fall and Winter a safe one for boaters and hunters through broadened awareness.

Watch the Missouri State Water Patrol homepage at www.mswp.state.mo.us for updates on Boating Safety Courses in your area.

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Home Page <http://www.mswp.state.mo.us>